



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO PAEDIATRIC CRITICAL CARE SERVICES IN THE HUNTER

Health Minister Jillian Skinner today announced the start of work to build a new paediatric intensive care unit at John Hunter Children's Hospital.

Mrs Skinner made the announcement following strong advocacy on the part of her Hunter parliamentary colleagues in the NSW Parliament - Tim Owen (Newcastle), Robyn Parker (Maitland), Andrew Cornwell (Charlestown), Garry Edwards (Swansea) and Craig Baumann (Port Stephens).

Mrs Skinner said the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) will provide high-quality specialised care for critically-ill children from the Hunter, New England and north coast areas of NSW.

"The Hunter community has been calling for a dedicated paediatric intensive care unit for years and it is with great pride that I can be here today to confirm the NSW Government's commitment to this service," Mrs Skinner said during a visit to John Hunter Children's Hospital today.

"Currently, intensive care services for children and young people are provided at John Hunter Hospital in a combined, co-located unit that also treats adults.

"Demand for paediatric intensive care services at John Hunter Children's Hospital has continued to grow with admissions jumping by 16 per cent over the past 10 years.

"During what is a challenging time in their lives, these young patients and their families will have access to a dedicated, specialised support of a unit focused on paediatric care."

Mrs Skinner said NSW provides excellent intensive care services for children across the network of Children's Hospitals and John Hunter Children's Hospital is the primary referral facility for more than 20 per cent of the state's children and young people.

"Detailed planning for this service will begin immediately involving local clinicians before work will begin on the unit, envisaged to provide about six specialist paediatric care beds, medical, surgical and major trauma services to be housed alongside the existing intensive care unit in a purpose-built area, featuring state-of-the-art equipment."

Tim Owen said the addition of a PICU under the management of the John Hunter Children's Hospital will provide the local community with integrated paediatric care while also complementing the quality existing services provided at the facility.

"A paediatric intensive care service will complement our existing 42-cot neonatal intensive care and special care nursery service, which provides complex care for more than 1100 premature and sick newborns each year," Mr Owen said.

Dr Cornwell said: "the NSW Government recognises the expert medical care available for children and young people in the Hunter and a designated PICU will further enhance the Children's Hospital's reputation as a world-class facility.

Mr Baumann said: "having a sick child requiring critical care is a difficult time for parents and families and travel can be an unnecessary added stress. The establishment of this PICU will assist both local and visiting patients in their time of need."

Mr Edwards said: "the NSW Government recognises families in NSW want the best medical care for their children available close to home, and today's announcement is an important step in delivering better care and easing this burden for families."

Ms Parker said: "young patients and their families from across the Hunter will benefit from this much-needed commitment."